

One thing I noticed, one fact that apparently is true, as I understand it, the Federal Trade Commission now has 50 million phone numbers that have been registered under the Federal do-not-call program. Fifty million Americans can't be wrong. They want relief. They want us, as their lawmakers, as their elected Representatives here in Washington, to do something to stop these calls.

The Federal Trade Commission, to its credit, and I appreciate them greatly for doing this, tried to come to their aid, come to their assistance, to make a national do-not-call registry a reality.

I think this is something the Nation is ready for. Fifty million people have already tried to sign up in the first few weeks after the announcement of the national do-not-call program. It is something we as Members of this body and as Members of the Congress, of the Federal Government, should try to do to ensure that the people of this country, if they want it, on a voluntary basis, can have some relief from unwanted telemarketing calls.

Congress mandated that this list be implemented on a national scale, and the President signed it into law. The legislation I am proposing now clarifies our intentions, and I certainly ask my colleagues to support the legislation in any way they can. I hope we will have a vote on this matter in very quick order.

With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE INTERNET TAX NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT OF 2003

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, S. 150, the Internet Tax Non-discrimination Act of 2003, will be referred to the Finance Committee for a brief 30-day review. As many of my colleagues are aware, this consensus legislation was unanimously approved by a voice vote by the Senate Commerce Committee on July 31. In addition, the House passed a similar measure on September 17. The current moratorium ends on November 1 and I am committed to acting before it expires.

As the strong bipartisan support of these measures indicates, there is a growing consensus that the Internet should never be singled out for mul-

tipled or discriminatory taxation. Rather, the unprecedented benefits of the Internet to our society and economy should be encouraged by policymakers. I am confident that the Finance Committee's review of this matter will confirm Congress' intent to permanently extend the moratorium, and I look forward to an expedited and non-controversial review of this matter as a member of the committee.

NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY'S METROPOLITAN EDUCATION AND TRAINING SERVICES PROGRAM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to Northern Kentucky University's Metropolitan Education and Training Services, METS, program. The ceremony to formally dedicate the METS center is scheduled for this morning in Boone County, KY.

The rapid rate of economic growth in the Northern Kentucky / Cincinnati metropolitan area has created a need for better-trained workers. In an attempt to address this problem, Northern Kentucky University has developed an innovative partnership with the Tri-County Economic Development Corporation, the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, and Delta Air Lines. The partnership ensures that the workforce has the skills needed to promote the region's growth.

Businesses that need educational services or a certain skill-set for its employees can contact METS, who will work with Northern Kentucky University to design the appropriate curriculum. If Northern Kentucky University does not offer a particular set of classes, METS arranges for students to take classes at other institutions via the Internet or Tele-conferencing.

The opening of this new state-of-the-art corporate training center is exciting for the region's business community and Northern Kentucky University. I am confident that METS can serve as a model for rapidly growing metropolitan communities, and I am pleased that this facility is in the Commonwealth. I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the official dedication of Northern Kentucky University's METS center.

FCC MEDIA OWNERSHIP RULES

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today in support of Senator DORGAN's effort to overturn the Federal Communication Commission's media ownership rules. I commend Senator DORGAN on his resolve to work with his colleagues in a bipartisan manner to bring forward a commonsense solution to this pressing issue.

Every 2 years the FCC is required to review its media ownership rules. This most recent decision to roll back media ownership limitations was the most sweeping in a generation. Was it in response to the American people

asking for this reform? No, in fact over 2 million Americans contacted the FCC opposing the rule changes. In my office, I received over 1,000 letters from Montanans opposing the decision. It seems that the FCC turned a deaf ear to the will of the American public. I hear them loud and clear.

I support Senator DORGAN's effort for three basic reasons: diversity, localism, and economics. First, if America is to have a vibrant democracy, one where our citizens are free to express their views and have equal accessibility to the news, we as policymakers must protect that right. The FCC's decision allows large corporations that already have considerable clout over what we hear and see to further consolidate. The decision allows TV networks to own more stations reaching more Americans. Even worse, these same stations could own the local newspaper in the same market.

We as Americans must have access to diverse news and information. The FCC's decision runs contrary to this axiom and would allow a few large television stations to reach nearly one-half of the viewing public. If the UHF discount is factored, nearly 90 percent of our Nation's households could be covered by one entity. Diversity is jeopardized when one company has this much leverage over what we see and hear.

Senator DORGAN has pointed out that localism is being lost to the bottom line. I can not agree more. A generation ago, Americans sat around the radio and listened to local news. We huddled around the TV to watch our local news anchor give us the latest information about our communities. Today, news and information is being portrayed as local, when, in reality, it is being broadcast to us from hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Instead of broadcasting news about our communities from our communities, media companies are broadcasting about our communities even though they are nowhere near us. This is not localism and we should not stand idle to this emerging trend.

This decision has the potential to cause job loss in Montana. In Montana we have many "mom-and-pop" newspapers and television stations. Typically, these companies serve the rural areas of our State and do a tremendous job reporting about local activities and news. And they are often owned and operated by local citizens living in the communities they serve. And very often they are run on a very tight budget. The FCC's ruling jeopardizes our local stations and newspapers because these new larger companies will be able to squeeze these companies out of the market through advertising revenues with sheer economic clout. With additional leverage over the media landscape, these small, rural companies will find it harder and harder to compete and keep their doors open. As Montana's senior Senator, I will fight to protect our small TV and newspaper owners.